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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001990

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MCAP](#) [YM](#) [DPRK](#)

SUBJECT: YEMENI MILITARY LEADERS BRIEF AMBASSADOR ON DPRK
CONTACTS

Classified By: AMB EDMUND J. HULL FOR REASONS 1.5 (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: On 8/10 Yemen's Chief of Staff and Defense Minister informed the Ambassador that President Saleh had taken the decision to end Yemeni military cooperation with North Korea. At Yemen's invitation a senior DPRK delegation, possibly including the deputy ministers of defense and industry, will soon visit Sanaa to discuss modalities. Yemen will seek redress of "technical problems" with SCUD missiles delivered in December, possibly involving the return of defective missiles to North Korea and refund of payment. The Yemenis made clear that these steps are being taken in response to the requests of the USG, particularly U/S Bolton's June visit, and Japan. End Summary.

2. (C) Ambassador, accompanied by DCM, OMC Chief and CT Coordinator, called on Chief-of-Staff Qasimi and MinDef Aliwa August 10 to discuss an impending visit to Yemeni by a North Korean delegation to discuss military cooperation. The meeting was a follow-up to MoD's meeting with BG Robeson August 4, in which Aliwa first informed the Ambassador that DPRK officials would visit soon.

3. (C) Following an initial discussion of Yemen's increasingly effective counter-terrorism efforts, the Ambassador turned to the main topic of the meeting: North Korea. Ambassador noted that he had requested the meeting to receive the ROYG's briefing on the impending visit of DPRK officials to review aspects of military cooperation between the two countries. He reminded Qasimi and Aliwa of the USG's deep concern over North Korea's past cooperation with Yemen, as underscored during the June visit of Under Secretary Bolton.

4. (C) Aliwa stated that Yemen had understood U/S Bolton's message, and for that reason had informed the U.S. Embassy of the pending DPRK visit -- which would possibly include the Deputy Ministers of Defense and Industry -- and welcomed the opportunity to provide details. Aliwa stated that Yemen had benefited from the low prices North Korea charged for its military goods and services. Nevertheless, at the urging of the USG, Japan and others, the ROYG had taken a "political decision" to end all cooperation with the DPRK. Talks with the visiting North Korean officials would concentrate on modalities of doing so. Aliwa said that President Saleh had personally made the decision and directed that he (Aliwa) brief the Ambassador. He added that Yemen would need U.S. help to compensate for the loss of affordable North Korean services, particularly with regard to construction of a naval/coast guard facility at Hodeidah.

5. (C) Chief of Staff Qasimi reviewed three areas of past bilateral cooperation between Yemen and the DPRK:

-- SCUD missiles, which had been provided under an old contract. Qasimi stressed that Yemen would not/not undertake any upgrades to its current stock of missiles, and revealed for the first time that the shipment of SCUDs received last December had "technical problems." He said Yemen had not formally accepted the defective missiles, and that addressing this problem would be one focus of the impending DPRK visit. Qasimi noted that one option was to return the missiles to North Korea and seek a refund if no other solution could be found. Aliwa suggested, in jest, that the U.S. might want to buy the missiles. In response to a direct question from the Ambassador, he said there was no/no possibility of any SCUDs being exported from Yemen to a destination other than North Korea.

-- A small ammunition factory in Abyan (southern Yemen), which had been producing small caliber ammunition since the 1970s.

-- A "coastal project" which had as yet had not been implemented. This involved several aspects, including construction of docks, a repair workshop and buildings for the residence of naval/coast guard personnel. The terms had been attractive for Yemen, as the North Korea had offered financing over a period of more than 10 years.

6. (C) The Ambassador urged the Yemeni military leadership to think holistically about planning facilities for the navy and coast guard to avoid duplication and inefficiency. He stressed that Yemen should develop its own domestic capabilities and minimize dependence on outside assistance,

such as North Korea had provided. Qasimi agreed, but noted that the ROYG had approached China, which was currently performing a study of possible coastal defense construction. Ambassador pointed out that cooperation with China did not carry the same sensitivity for the United States as did cooperation with North Korea. Qasimi and Aliwa both asked that the USG urge Japan to provide financial assistance to help Yemen meet its coastal defense needs. Aliwa asked that the USG also ask Yemen's Gulf neighbors to offer support. Qasimi expressed frustration with Saudi Arabia, which was providing financial support to improve security along the land border between the two countries but no help on confronting the maritime threat, which in fact was greater.

17. (C) Ambassador also raised the recent EP-3 incident, which is reported via a separate channel.

18. (C) Comment: Clearly the ROYG at the highest level received and have understood U/S Bolton's message on North Korea. Post will continue to work this issue closely with the Yemeni leadership as the ROYG works toward ending its cooperation with the DPRK. Embassy is currently studying ways to assist Yemen in developing coastal facilities. We have a plan to use currently available funding for facilities that serve the Yemen Coast Guard and Navy. Through military channels, we are requesting experts to look at the requirements holistically with the objective of a cost-effective approach that precludes recourse to North Korea.

HULL